



## A Research Proposal: "Becoming Catalan: Language and Racialization in Immigration and International Adoption"

In the summers of 2011 and 2012 I had the opportunity to perform pilot research with adoptive parents in Catalonia as I pondered a new long-term research project on the question of how language and physical difference affect who does and does not get to "count" as Catalan. For some of the parents, a belief in the power of culture to make their children fully Catalan coincided with beliefs that seemed to blend biology and culture in explanations of difference. For example, several parents of adopted children of

Chinese origin noted that their children walked "like Catalans" while the children of Chinese immigrants walked differently. When asked to explain this difference, some of the parents noted that walking style was a learned habit, others attributed it to physiological structure—even while noting that their own adopted daughters did not walk in this way. Other parents attributed their children's personality traits to their country of origin—one child's "toughness" was attributed to her West African origin. The aca-

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Grupo de Investigación

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Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona





Escada

demic success of girls of Chinese origin was attributed to genetic cum cultural inheritance.

These assessments are reminiscent of the “culture and personality” tradition—now discredited—in early American anthropology, in which each society was thought to follow a pattern of behavior similar to a “personality” in an individual. These examples show that parents are clearly grappling with the relationship between biology and culture and struggling with how to talk about it. These challenges resonate with—and may go beyond—writings about the racialization of culture in Europe in the last twenty years. My detailed ethnographic approach will permit me to describe the contours and functions of common scripts about physical difference in Catalonia. Moreover it will allow me to uncover the ways in which parents and children follow, challenge or rewrite these scripts as they face the question of whether and how to *become Catalan*.

This new research project grew organically out of my first ethnographic project. That project began in 2002 and resulted in my linguistic anthropology doctoral dissertation *Catalan that Doesn't Hurt the Eyes: Linguistic Display and Linguistic Regimentation in Barcelona* (2006, University of Michigan) and several article publications. In that body of work, I try to understand what it means for Catalan to have become a public language again after its exclusion from the public realm during the Franco dictatorship. I argue that while in many ways, Catalan is now seen as a neutral public language available for all to use, many still see it as a language with strong ethnonational ties.

My interest in adoption began when participants in my first study as well as other friends and acquaintances in Catalonia began to adopt children from abroad. I realized that I was witnessing a major social phenomenon... and one that would permit me to con-

tinue to ponder the Catalan language. If Catalan is a public language and Catalan is an identity available to all, children adopted by Catalan families should have the same opportunity to “become Catalan” as children born to Catalan families. I decided to develop a research project that would test this question.

The fact that the boom in international adoption coincided with the boom in immigration—often from the same countries—allows me to tease apart several variables: place of origin, physical appearance, and home language. Therefore, I have devised a four-way comparison among non-European international adoptees, European international adoptees, immigrants and locally born and raised children. Is speaking Catalan enough for children whose physical appearance may differ from that of other Catalan speakers to be accepted as Catalan? Through what processes can they become Catalan? In which situations is

their Catalan-ness questioned, and in which might they themselves choose not to be Catalan?

### Thinking about Immigration, Adoption and Racialization

“Race”—defined as the belief that cultural groups are bounded by shared genetic or physical traits—has never been a main component of definitions of Catalan-ness. Rather, *being Catalan* has been equated with *speaking Catalan*, a tie that appears to be loosening as Catalan gains ground as a more “neutral” public language that is available to people other than ethnic Catalans. Research on immigrants in Catalonia has tended to focus on school settings. Scholars working in such contexts have documented immigrants’ reluctance to speak Catalan and adopt a Catalan identity. Another line of research explores institutional policy favoring or disfavoring the integration of immigrant children. My research expands these studies



*Familia colores*

by observing immigrant and adopted children across a number of settings. Further, by comparing immigrant and adopted children, I am able to focus not only on children in isolation, but also on the ways in which children’s familial relationships affect their status as Catalans.

Anthropologists have recently focused on adoption as a window on processes of relatedness and belonging. As Briggs and Marre point out, international adoption is “a stratified form of assisted reproduction,” not-





*Imitando um leão*

ing that post-colonial inequalities often cause some (formerly colonized) countries to be “senders” of both migrants and adoptees to certain (former colonizing) countries. My study examines experiences of children from multiple countries of origin, taking into account the possible effects of the different historical and current relationships between these countries and Spain. I then juxtapose questions of physical difference with those of language, a

topic to which the adoption literature has paid little attention.

While “race” as a biological category has long been discredited, by the early 1990s, scholars were noting the presence in Europe of an exclusionary rhetoric founded on the belief in insurmountable differences in “culture” and the supposed universal human propensity for ethnocentrism—judging another cultural group according to the norms of one’s own group. Because this perspective treats culture as immutably mapped onto groups with shared genetic or physical traits, this belief may simply be a new way of arguing for racial difference (a.k.a., “racialization”). My project examines language, the cultural feature that—alongside religion—has most commonly been racialized—that is, seen as an inherent feature of particular groups otherwise defined by genetic or physical traits. While linguistic anthropologists have studied racialization in immigration, they have not focused on adop-

tion. This project combines these foci, taking Catalonia as a case in point for examining the current constellation of meanings surrounding language, physical difference and citizenship, which have shifted over time with WWII, decolonization, EU integration and finally the current European financial crisis.

### **Studying Racialization, Language and Belonging in Barcelona**

For initial clues to whether the study children *become Catalan* in different ways and to different degrees, I will analyze explicit commentary by children, teachers, peers and family members about the Catalan language and Catalan-ness, from both conversational and interview data. I predict that *explicit* talk about the Catalan language and Catalan-ness will be inclusive, a finding that would be consistent with public discourse, which tends to be explicitly anti-racist. Parents in my pilot study often made direct claims that their adopted children were not victims

of racism, but then went on to reveal subtle ways in which their children were indeed excluded. For example, one parent of a girl adopted from China told me that her daughter was fully accepted by her peers and had good friends at school. Later in our conversation, however, she mentioned that her daughter was generally excluded from her friends' birthday parties.

I anticipate that *implicit* clues in talk—such as in the above example—will reveal that the three sets of children not born to Catalan families do not have equal opportunities to “become Catalans.” The whiteness of European adoptees will likely enable them to count as Catalan, if they come from Catalan-speaking families. The non-European adoptees are likely to be considered Catalan in their school and family environments yet have their Catalan-ness questioned when they venture out of their daily settings (although the example of the girl excluded from her friends' birthday parties may suggest

that adopted children may not even *belong* to their school groups). The immigrant children are likely to be excluded from being “Catalan,” because neither do they have European appearances, nor do they come from Catalan-speaking families. Because school takes place in Catalan, these children will have command of Catalan but may not get to count as Catalan people. Instances in which speakers choose not to speak Catalan with these children, or in which the children themselves choose not to speak Catalan, or instances of subtle—or not so subtle—social exclusion, would support this finding. My previous research on Catalan's re-emergence as a public language will allow me to contextualize my findings about language, racialization and belonging within a broader understanding of the social life of the language.

Understanding underlying beliefs about who *belongs* is pressing in the current economic climate, in which many view immigration as a finan-



*Mesa da cozinha*

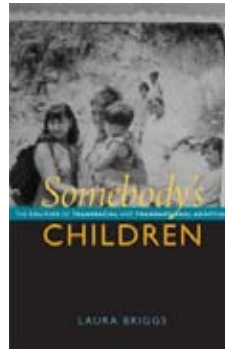
cial drain and in which Catalonia contemplates independence from Spain. In examining adoption and immigration—processes in which national identification cannot be taken for granted—scholars can learn about the nature of belonging and its relationship to language. Moreover, this original project will contribute to cross-disciplinary discussions about language and physical appearance as markers of difference in Europe. Finally, this research has implications for policy and the fields dedicated to the wellbeing of immigrants and adoptees.

## FURTHER READING



Leinaweaver, Jessaca (2013)  
[Adoptive Migration: Raising Latinos in Spain](#)  
 Durham: Duke University Press

Spain has one of the highest per capita international adoption rates in the world. Internationally adopted kids are coming from many of the same countries as do the many immigrants who are radically transforming Spain's demographics. Based on interviews with adoptive families, migrant families, and adoption professionals, Jessaca B. Leinaweaver examines the experiences of Latin American children adopted into a rapidly multiculturalizing society. She focuses on Peruvian adoptees and immigrants in Madrid, but her conclusions apply more broadly, to any pairing of adoptees and migrants from the same country.



Briggs, Laura (2012)  
[Somebody's Children: The Politics of Transracial and Transnational Adoption](#)  
 Durham: Duke University Press

In *Somebody's Children*, Laura Briggs examines the social and cultural forces—poverty, racism, economic inequality, and political violence—that have shaped transracial and transnational adoption in the United States during the second half of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first. Focusing particularly on the experiences of those who have lost their children to adoption, Briggs analyzes the circumstances under which African American and Native mothers in the United States and indigenous and poor women in Latin America have felt pressed to give up their children for adoption or have lost them involuntarily.



Yngvesson, Barbara (2010)  
[Belonging in an Adopted World: Race, Identity, and Transnational Adoption](#)  
 Chicago: The University of Chicago Press

Since the early 1990s, transnational adoptions have increased at an astonishing rate, not only in the United States, but worldwide. In *Belonging in an Adopted World*, Barbara Yngvesson offers a penetrating exploration of the consequences and implications of this unprecedented movement of children, usually from poor nations to the affluent West. Yngvesson illuminates how the politics of adoption policy has profoundly affected the families, nations, and children involved in this new form of social and economic migration.

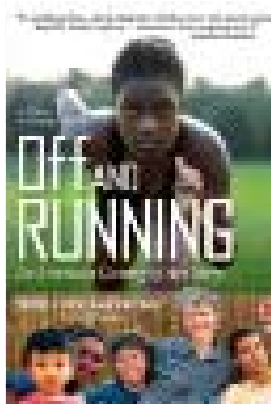
- ["Black kids in White Homes"](#) (2008)
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- Marre, Diana. 2009. "'We do not have immigrant children at this school, we just have children adopted from abroad': Flexible understandings of children's 'origins.'" *International adoption: Global Inequalities and the Circulation of Children*. D. Marre and L. Briggs, eds. Pp. 226-243. New York: New York University Press.
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- Silverstein, Paul. 2005. "Immigrant racialization and the new savage slot: race, migration and immigration in the new Europe". *Annual Review of Anthropology* 34:363-84.
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## FURTHER VIEWING



Goldstein, L. (2011)  
**Somewhere between**  
Documentary  
Canada 88 min.



Opper, N (2009)  
**Off and Running**  
Documentary  
USA 76 min.



Bertelsen, P. & Chevigny, K. (2001)  
**Outside Looking In:  
Transracial Adoption in America**  
USA 60 min.



Wang-Breal, S. (2010)  
**Wo Ai Ni (I Love You) Mommy**  
Documentary  
USA. 77 min.

This film tells the intimate stories of four teenaged girls. They live in different parts of the US, in different kinds of families and are united by one thing: all four were adopted from China. These strong young women allow us to grasp what it is like to come-of-age in today's America as transracial adopted. At the same time, we see them as typical American teenagers doing what teenagers everywhere do... struggling to make sense of their lives. And with great honesty and courage, these four girls open their hearts to experience love, compassion, and self-acceptance.

With white Jewish lesbians for parents and two adopted brothers—one mixed-race and one Korean—, Brooklyn Avery grew up in a unique and loving household. But when her curiosity about her African-American roots grows, she decides to contact her birth mother. This choice propels Avery into her own complicated exploration of race, identity, and family that threatens to distance her from the parents she's always known. When Avery decides to pick up the pieces of her life and make sense of her identity, the results are inspiring.

*Outside Looking In* brings personal insight and a critical lens to transracial adoption, looking at three families facing the challenges of adopting children across racial lines. It supplies a voice to those directly affected by adoption policies and explores larger topics facing our society: race, family, and identity. The film examined transracial adoption in America and won a Paul Robeson Award. By acting as a mentor and advocate for adopted and foster youth, Bertelsen's work with families and adoption extends beyond film.

In 2007 Donna and Jeff Sadowsky of Long Island, New York submitted their dossier to adopt eight-year old Fang Sui Yong from Guangzhou, China. From the very first moment Sui Yong meets her new mother, Donna, we get a real sense of the emotional confusion and loss Sui Yong experiences, as adoption workers translate their first words of communication. This day will change Sui Yong's life, forever. As she struggles to survive in this new world, we witness her transform into a lively, outspoken American. In a sense, she's the same girl Donna met in Guangzhou all those months ago – and yet she's utterly different.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THE TEXTS

### Susan Frekko

Susan Frekko is an assistant professor of anthropology in the Department of Sociology & Anthropology at Goucher College, Baltimore, United States, where she has taught since 2009. She completed her graduate training in linguistic anthropology at the University of Michigan (Masters in 2001 and Ph.D. in 2006) and her undergraduate training in anthropology and Spanish at Amherst College (1996). She teaches courses in cultural and linguistic anthropology to students at the undergraduate level. Frekko's dissertation research (2002-2003, 2004) on language, identity and the public sphere in Catalonia was supported by grants from Fulbright I.I.E., the Social Science Research Council and the Wenner-Gren Foundation. She has published articles resulting from this research in journals such as *Language in Society* and the *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*. Her new research compares adoption and immigration in Catalonia on the questions of language, racialization and belonging. Frekko is part of the AFIN research project launched in January, 2013: "Adoptions and fosterages in Spain: tracing challenges, opportunities and problems in social and family lives of children and adolescents" (CSO2012-39593-C02-00; PI: Diana Marre.) Frekko's other research interests include the cross-cultural comparison of parenting practices and the intersections between socialization and human development.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THE IMAGES

### Madalena Elek Machado

I was born in Sao Paulo on the 10th of March 1974. My mother always tells me that I had my eyes wide open when they took me to the hospital room, I looked at her with an expression that said "So, you are my mum!". I am an observer from the very beginning.

I graduated in industrial and graphic design in 1996. After finishing school, I decided to travel to Barcelona in order to continue studying and broadening my horizons. In 2003 I did postgraduate studies on Creative Illustration and Visual Communication Techniques at Escola Eina.

My professional career could be divided, in general terms, in three different phases. First, I used to work as a graphic designer in several studies between São Paulo and Barcelona, as well as a freelance. In 2007, I discovered fashion and, more concretely, the textile design and, therefore, I designed several pattern for companies like Oysho (Grupo Inditex), Mango, Zara and H&M. The third phase is as an illustrator, when I worked for La Vanguardia, Revista TPM, publishing houses like Salamandra, Global, Ágora, Abril and Scipione-Ática, among others. These three stages are only theoretical, since in reality they coexist and even melt most of the times. I am a mix of all these experiences. On my website - [www.madaelek.com](http://www.madaelek.com) -, there is a representative sample of my projects.

I currently live and work between my two cities, São Paulo and Barcelona, but I am open to the world.

# ON ADOPTIONS, FOSTERAGES AND BIRTHS: "DIVERSITIES" AND "NORMALITIES"



Imatge: Miguel Gaggiotti

23TH, 24TH, AND 25TH OCTOBER 2014  
ZARAGOZA, SPAIN

Colegio Mayor Universitario Virgen del Carmen  
c/ Albareda, 23. 50004 Zaragoza

**Afin**  
Grupo de Investigación

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Asociación de Familias Adoptantes de Aragón

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## DAY I - Thursday 24th October

9:30-10:00: Registration

10:00-10:30: Opening Session

10:30-11:30: 1<sup>st</sup> Session

### THE MEDICALIZATION OF CHILDHOOD DIFFERENCES

**RAYNA RAPP**. PhD Social Anthropology. New York University.

Moderator:

**DIANA MARRE**. PhD Social Anthropology. Autonomous University of Barcelona. AFIN Research Group.

11:30-13:00: Segunda Sesión

### ADOPTIONS, FOSTERAGES AND BIRTHS

**BRUNA ÁLVAREZ**. PhD Social Anthropology candidate. Autonomous University of Barcelona. AFIN Research Group.

**DIANA MARRE**. PhD Social Anthropology. Autonomous University of Barcelona. AFIN Research Group.

**MARÍA JOSÉ RODRÍGUEZ**. PhD Sociology. University of Alicante. AFIN Research Group.

Moderator:

**CARMEN LÓPEZ MATHEU**. PhD Social Anthropology. University of Barcelona. AFIN Research Group.

13:00-14:30: Lunch Break

14:30-15:30 3rd Session

### COMMUNICATIONS

15:30- 16:30: 4th Session

### GLOBAL TRENDS IN INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION AND SURROGACY

**PETER SELMAN**. PhD Demography. Newcastle University. AFIN International member.

Moderator:

**MARÍA JOSÉ RODRÍGUEZ**. PhD Sociology. University of Alicante. AFIN Research Group.

16:30-17:00: Coffee-Break

17:00-18:30: 5th Session

### FAMILIES, ASSOCIATIONS AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

**MERCEDES NAVARRO**. Medical PhD, adoptive mother. President of **AFADA** and **CORA** member.

**CARMEN LÓPEZ MATHEU**. PhD Social Anthropology. University of Barcelona. AFIN Research Group.

**MARIBEL JOCILES**. PhD Sociology. Complutense University of Madrid.

Moderator:

**LOLA CAMPOS**. Journalist and adoptive mother.

18:30-19:30: 6th Session

### ADOPTION ON THE SIDE OF THE CHILD: DOMESTIC ADOPTION OF CHILDREN IN THE U.K

**JOHN SIMMONDS**. Director of Policies, Research and Development of the British Association for Adoption and Fostering.

Moderator:

**TOMASA BÁÑEZ**. PhD Social Anthropology. University of Barcelona. AFIN Research Group.

19:30-20:30: 7th Session

### CINE FORUM

Moderator:

**BRUNA ÁLVAREZ**. PhD Social Anthropology candidate. Autonomous University of Barcelona. AFIN Research Group.

#### Conference Languages:

Spanish and English will be the conference languages. There will be simultaneous translation services.

#### Registration:

Early bird rate (deadline 15th of Sept.): 120 €  
Standard rate: 150 €

#### Further information:

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**[DOWNLOAD CALL FOR PAPERS](#)**

## DAY II - Friday 24th October

9:00-10:00: Octava Sesión

### CHILDHOOD, FAMILY AND PUBLIC POLICIES IN SPAIN

[SALOMÉ ADROHER](#). PhD Law. General Director of Family and Childhood's Services of the Spanish Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equity.

Moderator:

[BEATRIZ SAN ROMÁN](#). PhD Social Psychology. Autonomous University of Barcelona. AFIN Research Group.

10:00 -12:00: 9th Session

### ON CARE, FAMILIES, KINSHIP AND PUBLIC POLICIES

[DOLORS COMAS D'ARGEMIR](#). PhD Social Anthropology. University Rovira i Virgili. AFIN Research Group.

[ANNE CADORET](#). PhD Social Anthropology. CNRS-Cerlis (retired researcher), AFIN Research Group.

[ROSSANA DI SILVIO](#). Psychologist, Psychotherapist and Social Anthropologist. ASL Milano 1 and University Milano-Bicocca.

[TOMASA BÁÑEZ](#). PhD Social Anthropology. University of Barcelona. AFIN Research Group.

Moderator:

JOSÉ ÁNGEL GIMÉNEZ ALVIRA. Psychologist and adoptive father.

12:00-13:00. 10th Session

### POST ADOPTION CONTACT AND OPENNESS: THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE CHILDREN, ADOPTIVE PARENTS, AND BIRTH RELATIVES

[BETH NEIL](#). Director of Research of the Centre for Research on Children and Families, University of East Anglia.

Moderator:

ASSUMPTA RIGOL PhD Social Anthropology. University of Barcelona. AFIN Research Group.

13:00-14:30: Lunch Break

14:30-15:30: 11th Session

### COMMUNICATIONS

15:30-16:30: 12th Session

### ON ADOLESCENCES AND ADOLESCENTS

[JAUME FUNES](#). Psychologist, educator and journalist.

Moderator:

[ELENA BERMEJO](#). Psicóloga, madre adoptiva y vicepresidenta de [AFADA](#).

16:30-17:00 Coffe-break

17:00-19:00: 13th Session

### HOW (NOT) TO TALK ABOUT...

[BEATRIZ SAN ROMÁN](#). PhD Social Psychology. Autonomous University of Barcelona. AFIN Research Group.

[SUSAN FREKKO](#). PhD Social Anthropology. Goucher College. Visiting Researcher at Autonomous University of Barcelona, AFIN Research Group

[ANA MARÍA RIVAS](#). PhD Sociology. University Complutense of Madrid.

[NEUS ABRINES](#). PhD Psychology. Department of Health Services, Research and Policy. London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. AFIN Research Group.

Moderator:

MARIBEL OLIVER. Social educator. Adoption Service, [Instituto Aragonés de Servicios Sociales](#).

18:30-19:30: 14th Session

### LEARNING AT SCHOOL EN LA ESCUELA

[MONICA DALEN](#). PhD Philosophy. University of Oslo.

Moderator:

[OLGA LÁZARO](#). Psychopedagogue, Early Education Teacher, adoptive mother and vicepresident of [AFADA](#).

20:00-20:30: 15th Session

### CINE FORUM

Moderator:

[SUSAN FREKKO](#). PhD Social Anthropology. Goucher College. Visiting Researcher at Autonomous University of Barcelona, AFIN Research Group.

## DAY III - Saturday 25th October

09:30-10:30: 16th Session

### DEALING WITH THE DIFFICULTIES RELATED TO FASD

[DIANE BLACK](#). Medical PhD, adoptive mother of three children with FASD and president of the European FASD Alliance.

Moderator:

[NATÀLIA BARCONS](#). PhD Clinical Psychology, Researcher of AFIN Research Group and Coordinator of AFIN Services Centre.

10:30-12:30: 17th Session

### ON HEALTH AND DISEASE, NORMAL AND ABNORMAL, ORDERS AND DISORDERS

[NATÀLIA BARCONS](#). PhD Clinical Psychology, Researcher of AFIN Research Group and Coordinator of AFIN Services Centre.

[ASSUMPTA RIGOL](#). PhD Social Anthropology. University of Barcelona. AFIN Research Group.

YANGPING LIAO. Economist & Social Anthropologist PhD candidate. Autonomous University of Barcelona. AFIN Research Group.

[INMACULADA GONZÁLEZ VIEJO](#) y VICTORIA PUEYO. Medical PhD. Paediatric Ophthalmology Service of University Hospital Miguel Servet.

Moderator:

MANUEL DE SANTIAGO. ESocial educator. Adoption Service, [Instituto Aragonés de Servicios Sociales](#).

12:30-13:30: 18th Session

### "NEW" FATHERHOODS

[XAVIER ROIGÉ](#). PhD Social Anthropology. University of Barcelona.

Moderator:

[PAOLA GALBANY](#). PhD Social Anthropology. Autonomous University of Barcelona. AFIN Research Group.

13:30-14:00

### CLOSING SESSION

[DOLORS COMAS D'ARGEMIR](#). PhD Social Anthropology. University Rovira i Virgili. AFIN Research Group.